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ABSTRACT

Competency-based staff development is supported as the route to program improvement in preservice and inservice preparation of educational administrators. (Author/MLF)

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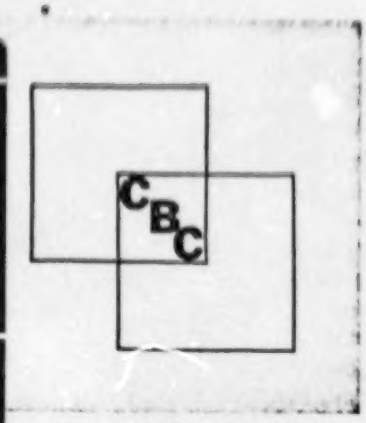

CCBC Notebook

The Competency Based Curriculum

No. 1, Vol. 5, October 1975

Responses from the July issue of the Notebook were highly favorable to the emphasis on competency-based staff development. Both higher education and public school people expressed strong support for competency-based staff development as the route to program improvement in pre-service and in-service preparation of educational administrators.

The August meeting of the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration focused upon efforts to assess competence. Ben Harris, The University of Texas, Austin, Al Wilson, Kansas State University, and Vivian Smith, Quebec, have prepared articles to include assessment procedures developed in the projects centered at their institutions. Dave Erlandson, Queen's College, describes the work of the Interest Group on Competency Based Education in his editorial.

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David Erlandson, Queen's College

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THE EMERGENCE OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

David A. Erlandson, Queens College of
The City University of New York

At the first session of the Competency Based Curriculum Interest Group at Bozeman, Edgar Kelley distributed a paper on "Problems in Evaluating Competence." The paper provided a review and clarification of the current obstacles which stand in the way of assessing competence and which block the development of competency based programs in Educational Administration. The second and third sessions of the Interest Group featured presentations by Ben Harris, Alfred Wilson, Howard Domeke, and Lloyd McCleary regarding the progress which has been made at each of their institutions in the development of assessment systems. Each directly addressed the major problems outlined by Kelley's paper. We haven't yet solved the problems of assessment which were presented and discussed, but the clear impression reported by individuals who attended all the sessions is that the comprehensive evaluation systems needed for meaningful competency based programs are within reach.

Probably one of the difficulties in the past has been that much of the search for an assessment procedure has focused upon developing a single, efficient, highly reliable technique for precisely measuring a comprehensive set of valid administrative competencies. This in turn has led down the blind alley of trying to generate and validate lists of competencies which are sufficiently abstract in statement to have meaning across the field and sufficiently specific to be susceptible to measurement. It has also led those concerned with assessment to look for a more precise, mechanistic assessment than what is afforded through human judgments (no matter how expert the judges might be). At least one observer has somewhat derogatorily designated assessment by human judges as "competency by jury."

However, as Kelley pointed out in his paper: "Competency, like beauty, is judged by the viewer." He further maintains that "competence is not a product of what the individual knows, does, or feels; instead, competence is ascribed when what a person knows, does, or feels is evaluated as being positive in its results by the audiences actually engaged in judging competence within a specific setting." The danger is that final judgments of student competency are likely to be made almost exclusively by a university professor, a person sometimes uniquely unqualified and almost always too limited in perspective to make comprehensive judgments about administrative competence. Kelley lists a variety of audiences who have legitimate inputs into judgments about administrative competence.[1] Thus, the key to competency assessment lies not in the development of a mechanistic, non-judgmental measure but in the development of an assessment <u>system</u> which blends relatively hard, non-judgmental data about student knowledges and characteristics with a complementary array of judgments on performance made by judges carefully selected for their expertise in making particular types of judgments.

It was the unveiling of well researched, data based, theoretically sound, and practically viable assessment systems at Bozeman (Harris, McCleary, Wilson)

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[1] Edgar A. Kelley, "Administrator Preparation Programs: Problems in Evaluating Competence," a paper presented on August 18, 1972 to the Competency Based Curriculum Interest Group of the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration," Bozeman, Montana.

which enabled group participants to leave with a genuine sense that competency based systems are within our grasp. There are clearly a number of workable systems presently in operation. These systems still have their rough edges, but the systems are sufficiently well defined and comprehensive to allow new inputs and modifications.

The problem of assessment still is not solved for the many colleges and universities across the nation which wish to implement competency based programs in Educational Administration. The fact that some institutions have developed competency based instructional systems provides direction to any others that wish to do so; but, generally, their work is not directly translatable to the institutions of potential users. What colleges and university programs in Educational Administration need is a strategy for interweaving their own needs, aspirations, and program identities with those designs for competency development and assessment which have been developed.

I propose using our Interest Group time at the 1976 NCPEA meeting in Knoxville to enable personnel from colleges and universities that wish to develop competency programs to interact with those who have developed fairly comprehensive programs so that the particular specifications of the new programs may be most efficiently served by the techniques and strategies which are currently available. More specifically, what I have in mind is a series of workshop sessions in which alternative strategies and techniques are briefly presented and then much time is given to one-to-one and small group interactions. I have tentatively outlined the areas of interest as (1) "identification and validation of competencies," (2) "competency development," (3) "relationships in a competency program" (both governance and instructional relationships), and (4) "competency assessment."

Further, I think it would be highly appropriate if, during the year, specific needs were identified and if interpersonal communication links were anticipated so that our time at Knoxville can be most efficiently used. In other words, if an institution is particularly interested in incorporating part of the University of Utah materials, part of the University of Texas materials, or some aspect of the Queens College procedure, we perhaps can plan in advance for representatives from that institution to confer with Lloyd McCleary, Ben Harris, or myself.

This, of course, may be too ambitious; but to the degree that we can accomplish this kind of pre-planning I believe that we will make our effort at Knoxville more productive and that the needs of institutions which plan to develop competency based programs will be most effectively served. We have, of course, an excellent communication vehicle in the Notebook.

I welcome specific suggestions which you can make regarding either an alternative direction for the Interest Group, modifications to the above format, or elaborations on the above format. The Notebook will serve the function of providing pre-NCPEA information about existing programs and techniques. So if you have particular aspects of competency based education that interest you or a particular competency based program that you would like to know more about, please let me know.

An article by Cass Gentry et al in the September 1974 issue of PBTE was entitled "For Want of An Assessment System, CBTE Programs are Lost." The

article makes the point which most people in competency based education have felt: if we can't comprehensively assess competence, we are wasting our time in talking about competency development. It is the consensus of many who were at Bozeman that collectively we can fill this vital gap in Educational Administration. What needs to happen now is the further refinement of the existing systems and their translation to a multitude of different institutional settings.